

Template Conformity with Bands

Cut the reference ad into horizontal bands by height, declare which bands are locked and which vary, and the image model stops inventing an entirely new ad.

01 When to use this

Use this the moment a generated ad only vaguely resembles your reference. The tell is when the only thing that carried over is one obvious element and everything else was made up. This is the correction prompt, not the first prompt.

02 The prompt

That drifted too far from the reference. The only thing you carried over was `<WHAT_SURVIVED>`. Everything else you invented.

Start over and do it this way instead.

1. DIGEST the reference ad at `<REFERENCE_PATH>`. Describe its structure back to me before you generate anything.
2. Identify the specific areas that could be tweaked. Which parts are levers I can pull, and which parts are the identity of the ad.
3. Decompose it into horizontal BANDS by percentage of height. For example:
 - Logo band, 0 to 20 percent
 - Transition and negative space
 - Product band
 - Footer band

Use the real bands you find, not my example.

4. TEMPLATE OUT the changes. For each band, say explicitly whether it is LOCKED or VARIES, and if it varies, what it varies across.
5. Then generate, demanding much more conformity to the reference than last time.

What I want is a template I can hot swap any product into and be about eighty percent sure the output is okay.

Do NOT overlay procedurally rendered elements on top of the generated image. Keep it a pure prompt template. Stacking a compositor on top of a generation stacks two separate failure modes.

Finally, give each template a VARIATION POOL: <e.g. warm or cool lighting, indoor or outdoor, different skin tones, 3-up or 4-up collage>. I want `<N>` templates times `<M>` variants to give me genuinely distinct outputs, not near-identical ones.

03 What it is actually doing

Image models drift. Give one a reference ad and it will take the vibe and invent the rest. Nick's first attempt produced ads where the only thing carried over was two logos facing each other. Everything else was new.

The fix is to re-impose structure. More freedom for the model means more rope to hang itself with. Business wants repeatable output, so you take some of that rope back.

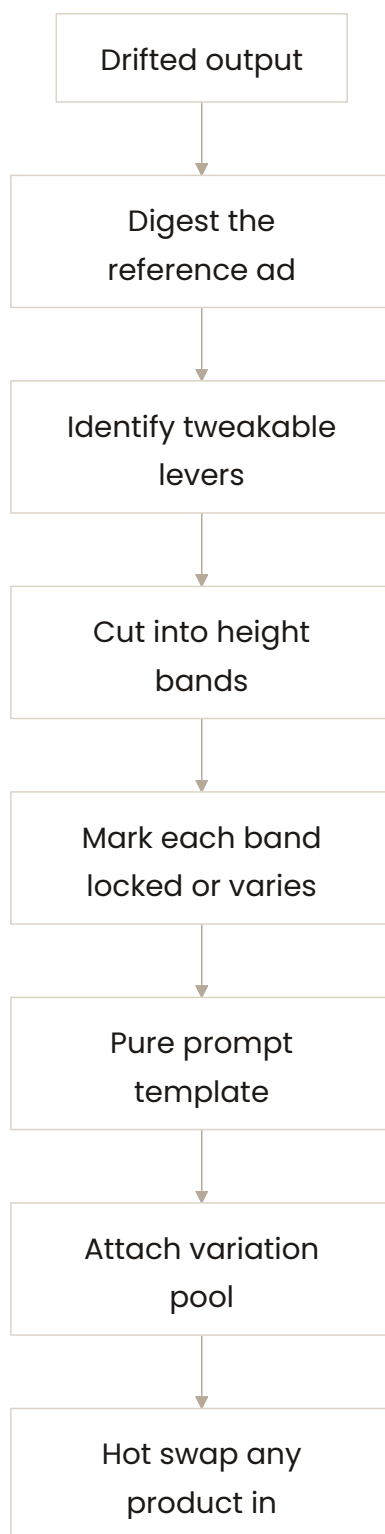
Bands are how you do it. You slice the ad horizontally by percentage of height. Logo band across the top twenty percent. Some negative space. The product band. A footer band. Now the ad is not a vibe, it is four labeled regions.

Then you declare which bands are locked and which vary. The logo band never changes. The product band swaps per product. That declaration is the template. Nick's target, stated right in the prompt, is a template you can hot swap any product into and be about eighty percent sure the output is okay.

One decision worth taking seriously: do not paste procedurally rendered text or logos on top of a generated image. It sounds like the safe hybrid. It is not. You now have two independent things that can go wrong in one output, and the failures multiply. Keep it a pure prompt template.

Last piece is the variation pool. Three templates run five times give you fifteen files, but they can be fifteen near-twins. Attach a pool of real differences to each template, warm or cool light, indoors or out, different skin tones, three items or four, and the same fifteen become genuinely distinct.

04 How it flows



05 Step by step

01 Name what actually survived

Tell Claude exactly which element carried over and that everything else was invented. Specific feedback beats saying it does not look right.

02 Make it digest before it draws

Ask for a written description of the reference structure first. If its description is wrong, its output was never going to be right.

03 Ask which parts are levers

Have it separate the areas that can be tweaked from the parts that are the ad's identity. Same thinking as picking knobs in the compositing workflow.

04 Cut it into bands

Decompose the ad into horizontal bands by percentage of height. Logo band, negative space, product band, footer band. Percentages, not vague positions.

05 Declare locked versus varies

Go band by band and mark each one. This declaration is the template. Anything unmarked will drift.

06 State the conformity target

Say you want a template you can hot swap any product into and be about eighty percent sure it is okay. Naming the bar changes the output.

07 Refuse the hybrid overlay

Do not composite procedural elements onto a generated image. Two failure modes stacked in one file is worse than either alone.

08

Attach a variation pool

Give each template a list of real differences to draw from, so three templates times five variants produces fifteen distinct ads rather than fifteen twins.

06 **Words explained****Conformity**

How closely the output sticks to the reference. High conformity means it copied the structure. Low conformity means it improvised.

Band

A horizontal slice of the ad defined by percentage of height, like the top twenty percent. It turns a picture into named regions you can control.

Digest

Read and describe something back before acting on it. A cheap way to catch a misunderstanding before it costs a generation.

Lever

A part of the design you deliberately allow to change. Everything that is not a lever is meant to stay put.

Hot swap

Drop in a different product and get a working ad without rebuilding the template.

Variation pool

A list of real differences a template can draw from, like warm versus cool lighting, so repeat runs do not look like copies.

07 Watch out for

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- Nick's first attempt carried over only two logos facing each other and invented the rest. Vague reference instructions produce vague conformity.
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- Mixing a procedural overlay on top of a generated image stacks two independent failure modes. Do not do it, even though it looks like the safe option.
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- Bands defined by feel rather than percentage of height drift back into improvisation. Use numbers.
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- Leaving a band unmarked means the model treats it as free to reinvent.
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- Without a variation pool, fifteen outputs from three templates come out as fifteen near-identical files.
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08 How it connects

Image Model Feasibility Check

Feasibility proves the model can combine a reference and a product. Bands are the fix for the drift you see right after that works.

Design Tuner App

Both notes solve the same problem, turning taste into a fixed spec. The tuner uses sliders, bands use locked regions, because a pixel model has no sliders.

Compositing vs Direct Generation Models

This is the freedom versus reliability tradeoff in practice, including the explicit warning not to stack a procedural overlay on a generated image.

Batch Generation and Contact Sheet

A banded template plus a variation pool is what makes a direct generation batch worth reviewing, since the outputs are actually different from each other.

Credit. Framework and approach by Nick Saraev, from the template conformity segment of the direct image generation build in his Zero to One course on Claude Code for marketing. Written up for the Kape vault by BrewedOps.